



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 11, 2020
TO: Board of Supervisors
THROUGH: Tim Hemstreet, County Administrator
FROM: Dr. David Goodfriend, Director, Health Department
RE: Public Coronavirus Briefing, Question Packet 2

This packet contains staff responses to questions provided by the members of the Board of Supervisors regarding the topic of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Part 2

29. Is there more than one strain of COVID 19? If so, how will that influence testing? (Randall)

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#), the coronavirus is able to change and adapt, similar to influenza. This allows coronavirus to affect different animal species and to cause such diverse illnesses in humans as COVID-19, SARS, MERS and the common cold. It is expected that COVID-19 will similarly continue to evolve. It is unclear, though, whether this further evolution will have any impact on the ability to develop effective vaccinations or antiviral medications. ([More about the types of coronavirus](#)).

30. In Loudoun, do we have private companies capable of doing COVID 19 testing? (Randall)

As of March 11, 2020, both Quest and LabCorp can test for COVID-19. Neither lab obtains the specimen from individuals, this needs to be performed by a healthcare provider.

31. Where can Loudoun County residents get tested? (Randall)

Loudoun County residents should contact their healthcare provider if they believe they may be infected with COVID-19. Unless they are having a medical emergency, residents are discouraged from going to the emergency department for evaluation or testing.

32. Can testing be made faster for adults who are immune-compromised? (Randall)

As of March 11, 2020, there is no backlog in testing capacity. The limiting factor is the time it takes to get the test to the lab. It is expected the total turnaround time would be around 2-3 days.

33. How long can COVID 19 lay dormant in one's body? (Randall)

It is believed that the virus may take up to 14 days after exposure to cause illness. The CDC states that the following symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure: fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

34. What if a County Employee has COVID 19 symptoms but does not have enough sick leave to remain home? (Randall)

If an employee has COVID-19 or COVID-19 symptoms, the employee should follow normal sick leave procedures. They would use accrued sick leave. If they have no sick leave or run out of sick leave mid-illness, we would apply their other accrued leave such as annual, personal, floating holiday, etc.

If there is reason to believe that the employee's illness arose out of his/her employment and/or was contracted in the course of performing his/her duties, injury leave would be triggered. In such a case, the employee would file a workers compensation claim and injury leave would initially apply while the county's third party vendor makes a determination as to whether the claim was compensable. If the claim is found to be non-compensable, we would go back and change the injury leave applied to the employee's accrued leave.

If an employee becomes seriously ill and is out of all leave accruals, short-term disability and donated leave would be explored, subject to the normal requirements and restrictions.

As long as the employee has met the eligibility requirements for Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), his or her job will be protected for up to 12 weeks, even if the employee is out of accrued leave.

35. Is it legal for retailers to “mark-up” urgently needed supplies like soap? What should one do if they observe this happening? (Randall)

According to the [Virginia Office of the Attorney General](#), “The Virginia Post-Disaster Anti-Price Gouging Act is activated when the governor or the president declares a state of emergency covering parts of Virginia. The act prohibits a ‘supplier’ from charging unconscionable prices for ‘necessary goods and services’ within the affected area during thirty (30) day period following the declared state of emergency.” If you believe that a retailer is raising prices for necessary goods and services, you should file a complaint with Virginia’s Office of the Attorney General. Instructions for filing a price gouging complaint are [posted on the OAG website](#).

It is important to note that as of March 11, 2020, no state of emergency has been declared for Virginia.

36. Is a person who is known to have been exposed to COVID 19 legally required to self-quarantine? (Randall)

In general, no, a person who is known to have been exposed to COVID-19 is not legally required to self-quarantine. In Virginia, enforced quarantine and isolation can only occur through an order by Virginia’s Health Commissioner. For more than a month, the Health Department has been successfully monitoring Loudoun County residents on voluntary quarantine or isolation as a result of travel to high risk countries.

37. Since the first Loudoun County case was a first-responder, are there special protection procedures in place for first-responders to enable them to respond to calls without spreading the virus? (Randall)

The first responder case was not a Loudoun County resident. On Sunday, March 8, 2020, the Loudoun County Combined Fire and Rescue System announced that one of its members was quarantined voluntarily after coming in contact with an individual outside of Loudoun County who has since tested positive for the coronavirus (COVID-19). At this time, this individual is not considered a “case.”

On Tuesday, March 10, 2020, the Loudoun County Health Department reported its first resident of Loudoun County that was tested “presumptive positive” of COVID-19 in Loudoun County. This was the first known case of COVID-19 reported in Loudoun County. A “presumptive positive” is a case that has tested positive the state laboratory and will be sent to the CDC for confirmation. The Health Department responds to “presumptive positive” cases as if they are positive.

Loudoun County first responders are following the guidance provided by the CDC for first responders, including [emergency medical services and public safety personnel](#).

38. Are we only testing people who are clearly symptomatic? What if a person has mild symptoms, can a person still be tested? (Randall)

Testing by the state laboratory must meet [criteria set out by the CDC](#). Testing through private laboratories does not have this requirement.

39. What are the effects on pregnant women? Should they do more to avoid social settings, is there greater risk to an unborn child? (Randall)

In general, it is prudent for women to take steps to stay protected from any infection during their pregnancy. According to the [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#) (ACOG), “Based on limited data and case examples from previous coronaviruses (SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV) and a small number of COVID-19 cases, it is believed that pregnant women may be at higher risk of severe illness, morbidity, or mortality compared with the general population.” More information about [pregnant women and infants and COVID-19 is posted on the CDC’s website](#).

40. If things get much worse, are hospitals safe to women to deliver, for people who have suppressed immune systems etc. (Randall)

Our hospitals have systems in place to keep their patients safe. It is recommended that people who need emergency or inpatient care continue to go to the hospital, while those without this need continue to see their primary care provider for routine medical care.

41. Should LCPS be shut down to control the spread? (Randall)

The Loudoun County Health Department has advised LCPS that all decisions should be made in consultation with local public health as recommendations will likely change due to factors such as: prevalence of COVID-19 in the community, ability to prevent spread within the school, and the potential detrimental effects of dismissal or closure of schools.

42. What precautions is LCPS doing to prevent the spread of COVID 19 (especially at the elementary school level)? (Randall)

Per the [Loudoun County Public Schools \(LCPS\) website](#), LCPS maintenance personnel clean schools and facilities nightly, with special focus on “high touch” surfaces such as doors, door knobs, push plates on doors, and desks, to maintain a clean, safe environment. In addition, if a particular class or school suffers higher-than-average absenteeism due to illness, LCPS’ maintenance teams are prepared to disinfect large indoor areas, as part of our effort to safeguard students.

The CDC has recommended the following for schools: “Perform routine environmental cleaning. Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with cleaners that you typically use. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students and staff before each use.”

43. What is the “tipping point” when LCPS will close schools? What happens if a larger than normal number of kids are coming to school sick? (Randall)

The County’s [Pandemic Response Plan](#) includes school closures as one action that is appropriate under certain circumstances. It is difficult to predict an exact trigger in this instance; however, the Health Department and LCPS are working closely on this issue. A decision to close would not necessarily depend on a confirmed case within the schools; conversely, closure may not be beneficial if a case in the schools is confirmed.

In a March 8, 2020, message to parents, Superintendent Dr. Eric Williams stated, “LCPS also is reviewing our operations and response plans, consulting closely with the Loudoun County Department of Health and accessing the latest available information from the Virginia Department of Health and federal health authorities. We plan to make decisions regarding changes to school operations, including any potential closure of schools, in conjunction with health authorities in order to protect the health and well-being of our students, staff, their families and the community.

In case LCPS must close schools for an extended period of time, staff is developing contingency plans that involve online learning and other off-site learning experiences.”

The school has reinforced the importance of students and staff staying home when sick. As COVID-19 can be spread prior to the display of symptoms, there is no way to assure that students or staff are not contagious.

For ongoing information and actions being taken by LCPS, please visit their [website](#).

44. What if an LCPS Employee has COVID 19 symptoms but does not have enough sick leave to remain home? (Randall)

No leave will be charged to an employee’s leave bank if the employee is instructed to self-quarantine or isolate by a government health official. If an employee becomes ill, sick leave and FMLA would be available, similar to when an employee contracts the flu or other illness. Part-time employees are paid for hours worked and do not earn leave.

45. For people with children who have an underlying health condition, should they remove their children from LCPS as a precaution even if not COVID 19 positive? (Randall)

According to Loudoun County Health Department, there is currently no public health basis for students or staff to stay at home in response to COVID-19, even if they have an underlying health condition. If there was not a medical basis to keep a student out of school during influenza season, it would be unlikely that this condition would prevent the student from safely attending school currently.

46. How often are kids in school required or allowed to wash their hands? Can they be allowed to wash their hands before they eat lunch? (Randall)

LCPS encourages students and staff to wash their hands frequently along with other universal preventive actions such as covering your cough and sneezing into your elbow. Students are allowed to wash their hands at any time, including before meals.

47. What is the procedure at Dulles for passengers arriving on international flights? (Randall)

The Federal Government has designated Washington Dulles as one of 11 U.S. International Airports for receiving passengers whose travel has included travel from China and Iran in the prior 14 days. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are conducting Enhanced Public Health Assessments at Washington Dulles per the current guidance from CDC HQ. This involves specific procedures for passengers that have traveled to specific high risk areas within the prior 14 days. In addition to the travelers noted above, Traveler Health Alert Notices are given to arriving passengers from other high risk areas where COVID-19 community spread may be occurring.

The Airports Authority defers to CDC to address their specific procedures. [CDC COVID-19](#) information is currently available online. The CDC has also published specific travel information for [Travelers Returning from High-Risk Countries](#).

48. What happens if an international passenger is exhibiting COVID 19 symptoms in flight or shortly after landing? (Randall)

Airline crews are trained to spot ill passengers on international flights and to send a report to the appropriate officials at the port of entry. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), in cooperation with the CDC Washington Quarantine Station, have specific protocols to assess arriving ill passengers.

The Airports Authority defers to CDC to address their specific procedures. [CDC COVID-19](#) information is currently available online. The CDC has also published specific travel information for [Travelers Returning from High-Risk Countries](#).

49. Testing at Dulles Airport does not seem as robust as other international airports in other countries. Is there a reason for the lag and can Dulles be more pro-active? (Randall)

Public health measures at international airports outside of the U.S. vary widely and according to local conditions. It is important to note that CDC does not conduct testing at the airport; the CDC performs public health assessments. The Airports Authority does not screen or test passengers for public health purposes; however, the Airports Authority provides logistical support for the CDC's mission to conduct passenger public health assessments at Dulles Airport. Although the Airports Authority defers to CDC to describe their health assessment program details, CDC and airports logistic operations activity at Washington Dulles is fully consistent with other U.S. airports in performing health assessments.

50. What if a Dulles Airport or Airline Employee has COVID 19 symptoms but doesn't have enough sick leave to remain home? (Randall)

The Airports Authority provides all Airport Authority employees with leave to use if they are sick and cannot work. Airport Authority employees who do not have enough leave to cover their absence due to COVID-19 will be advanced leave to cover their period of quarantine. Employees are encouraged to stay home if they are sick and to notify their manager with any concerns they have. Airlines and non-Airports Authority businesses which have workers at Dulles International maintain their own human resources guidelines for taking sick leave.

[CDC COVID-19](#) information is currently available online, including guidance from the CDC regarding preventing the spread of COVID-19 [if you are sick](#).

51. Is there faster testing available for Dulles Airport or airline employees who work in International flights? (Randall)

It is important to note that CDC does not conduct testing at the airport; the CDC performs public health assessments. The Airports Authority provides logistical support for the CDC's mission to conduct passenger public health assessments at Dulles Airport. While medical testing for COVID-19 is not determined by or conducted at the airport, a patient's physician would take into account many factors into account to determine if COVID-19 testing were appropriate, including exposure opportunities.

[CDC COVID-19](#) information is currently available online.

52. At this time, is Dulles Airport still accepting flights from China, India or other countries with a high number of identified COVID 19 cases? (Randall)

The CDC makes the determination on which passengers are screened. At this time, CDC screening is limited to individuals who have been China or Iran within the past 14 days. There are no direct flights between China or Italy and Dulles at this time due to airline cancellations / schedule adjustments. Flights on Air India between Dulles and Delhi continue; there is no CDC guidance on travel to/from India. All other Washington Dulles scheduled flights / airport operations / procedures occurring on-Airport continue as usual.

53. How have local hospitals and clinics prepared for a major COVID 19 outbreak? (Randall)

Loudoun County Health Department is working closely with StoneSprings and Inova Loudoun Hospital on preparations for addressing surges in demand for emergency department services, including sufficient supplies and the potential need for medical tents or trailers. This builds on work done with Inova Loudoun Hospital around the H1N1 pandemic. The county is fortunate that both hospitals are part of systems in Northern Virginia that have active teams working on how best to keep their hospitals safe and effective in addressing their communities' needs.

54. Are hospitals capable of handling large numbers of COVID 19 symptomatic patients showing up in the emergency rooms unannounced? (Randall)

During an outbreak, our healthcare system relies on sick people being evaluated in the most appropriate setting. Fortunately, it appears that the large percentage of people who may become infected with COVID-19 do not need emergency care. To best address the increased demand for medical evaluation, this includes private providers conducting phone triage of their “worried well” patients who may not need evaluation, private providers seeing those are stable who do need evaluation, and emergency departments for those who have more serious symptoms. Additionally, our hospitals are actively planning on how best to address a surge in patients presenting to emergency departments.

55. What are the maximum number of COVID 19 patients our hospitals can handle? (Randall)

Hospitals have limitations on such resources on emergency department, negative pressure rooms, inpatient and intensive care unit beds. Each of these can be impacted by COVID-19. Our hospitals do have some ability to surge capacity within their facilities and a more robust ability to surge within their hospital systems. Additionally our hospitals are actively working through other means of further surging capacity.

56. Do local hospitals have contingencies to augment staff, particularly if other local hospitals have a simultaneous need for augmented staff? (Randall)

Our hospitals do have contingency plans to augment staff. Depending on how other hospitals and communities are impacted, this could include shifting staff from other staff within their hospital system, using contract staff, and increasing the hours of existing staff. Additionally, Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) volunteers can assist if needed in specific areas that could free up hospital staff to address higher level functions.

57. Should people with symptoms call hospital emergency rooms before they go to the emergency room? (Randall)

If it is not an emergency, people with symptoms should call their primary care provider. If they do need to go to the emergency room, they should call ahead if possible. Similarly, if they need an ambulance, it is important they notify the dispatcher that they suspect they may have COVID-19.

58. If things get much worse, are hospitals safe to women to deliver, for people who have suppressed immune systems etc.? (Randall)

The safety of their patients and staff are top priorities for our hospitals. During the 2014, Inova Loudoun Hospital and Reston Hospital (StoneSprings did not exist at that time) were two of the three hospitals in northern Virginia to pass the Centers for Disease Control’s (CDC’s) rigorous criteria for evaluating a patient who may be sick with Ebola and they continue to have strong infection prevention programs.

59. Is the county establishing standardized response procedures at the various county living facilities (Lansdowne Woods, Ashby Ponds, etc.) since these are high risk, concentrated population centers? (Randall)

Many infections, including the seasonal flu, disproportionately impact Loudoun's senior citizens if they spread widely in our community. As a result, the local Health Department works closely with our residential facilities each year on ways they can best keep their residents safe. The local Health Department believes that COVID-19 will similarly disproportionately impact our seniors and Loudoun County is prioritizing outreach to nonresidential locations, such as retirement communities and senior centers.

Only licensed facilities (assisted living, nursing, etc.) are required to have emergency plans. Retirement communities are not required to have an emergency plan. Instead, departments provide outreach and education information to residents upon request.

The senior centers are the responsibility of the county and they are prepared and a part of any contingency as envisioned by Loudoun County's Emergency Operations Plan.

60. Has the county considered establishing remote, on-site testing stations at senior living facilities? (Randall)

Loudoun County wants to minimize barriers for ill residents, particularly those at increased risk of serious complications from infection, from being evaluated for COVID-19. For the majority of residents, the best answer to this is for them to be evaluated and screened by their primary care provider because they may be ill from something other than COVID-19 that can be treated, such as influenza. For those who can't access a private healthcare provider, there may be a role for the Loudoun County government to obtain specimens for testing, particularly if there was concern over spread within the facility.

61. What can we expect from the Loudoun courts schedule regarding coronavirus? (Randall)

At this time, there is no change to the operating schedule of the Loudoun County courts. Loudoun County courts certainly have options with regard to schedule and other operational procedures, if required. Depending upon future events and under the careful advice and counsel of the Virginia Supreme Court, the local Health Department, their clerks, and the Sheriff's Office court security team, and County Administration there could be changes to courts' schedule and operations, if warranted. This information would be communicated through appropriate communication channels to the public and to any stakeholders as necessary.

Each court (juvenile court, general district court and circuit court) has operated differently with regard to doing court business. For example, cases in the general district court may be very brief whereas cases in the circuit court may last for several hours or even days. Some courts have larger groups who attend court events/hearings while other courts may have smaller groups. Cases in the juvenile court are confidential so typically large groups are not gathered in these courtrooms. We are working with judges, judicial staff, court personnel and the various clerks' offices for these three courts to review responses and preparations to coronavirus. As mentioned, the courts do receive guidance from the Virginia Supreme Court and additional communications from the Supreme Court will be forthcoming to all judges.

With regard to the Clerk of the Circuit Court, the Clerk has implemented plans to offer remote services so certain patrons so not have to visits the courts complex. Details of these remote services intended to reduce gatherings of large groups in the circuit court Clerk's office will be posted on the Clerk's website. A future press release is expected with regard to these efforts.

62. My question for you is when a person is identified as having the Coronavirus in Loudoun County, how are the interactions of the infected individuals going to be traced? Additionally, who is going to do the tracking at this level in Loudoun County? (Randall)

Currently, when a person is identified as a COVID-19 case, the Health Department approaches the situation the same way it does individuals with tuberculosis. The Health Department interviews the individual, identified contacts who merit follow-up, and works with the case to self-isolate until the person no longer poses a risk to others.

63. Wanted to inquire about the case here in Loudoun County - I run a youth sports organization in the Ashburn Community and wanted to seek some level of certainty, without divulging any PII/Sensitive information; that this individual was NOT at our league championships held this past Saturday (March 7th) afternoon at Stone Bridge HS. We had a large population of the community in attendance and just want to seek clarity on the level of impact to those who were in attendance. (Randall)

When a person is identified as a COVID-19 case, the Health Department interviews the individual to identify any contacts of concern. Similar to what is being done with Christ Church, Georgetown, if people at an event were put at risk as a result of this case, the Health Department would notify the organizer and/or issue a press release so that event participants were made aware.

64. When will we close our schools to help protect our children and all that they may potentially carry it to? Let's stop this virus from spreading before it's too late. (Randall)

See question #13 for discussion on school closures.

65. Can you provide info on how individuals with no active symptoms might get tested? It is, quite literally, impossible from what I can gather. Even when there is just cause. Hospitals, doctors offices, cdc, local, state and national health organizations, etc.. all provide zero guidance. Just stonewalling and gaslighting. Any suggestions? (Randall)

COVID-19 testing is performed by a healthcare provider taking swabs and submitting them to a laboratory for testing. Until recently, only the government could perform this testing. Beginning March 6, 2020, a private laboratory, LabCorp, began conducting this testing, which significantly expanded the testing capacity. At the same time, the requirement that an individual be hospitalized or in contact with a known case in order to receive testing went away. Currently, if a patient is sick, they should contact their primary care provider, who can obtain the specimen from them if they have a contract with LabCorp. If they don't have a LabCorp contract, the doctor can still call the health department for possible testing through the State. It is not recommended at this time, though, that individuals be tested if they have no active symptoms and no contact with a known case.

66. I work at a high school. I am 73 and have autoimmune disease, should I self-quarantine and will I get paid? (Glass)

From the Health Department's perspective, what we believe at this time is that the risk to those with compromised immune systems is similar with COVID-19 and the seasonal flu. If an employee has a medical basis for staying home when seasonal influenza is present, then it may make sense for them to stay home when COVID-19 is present.

As noted in question #16, no leave will be charged to an employee's leave bank if the employee is instructed to self-quarantine or isolate by a government health official. If an employee becomes ill, sick leave and FMLA would be available, similar to when an employee contracts the flu or other illness. Part-time employees are paid for hours worked and do not earn leave.

A representative from Loudoun County Public Schools will attend the briefing on March 11, 2020 and will be ready and available to address any questions directly.